# Table of Contents

1. The Boyfriend's Truth
2. Lone Star State
3. The Interview

# The Boyfriend's Truth

Anna loved Peter.

He was kind, thoughtful, smart, and one of the nicest people Anna had ever dated. He wore his heart on his (jean jacket) sleeve and was very open about his feelings, something he admitted was only true because of years of therapy.

She was so excited that after a few months of dates and talking, they had finally become official. Anna had been on the phone with her sister for hours, talking about it and planning their first official date as a couple.

Anna had been so *excited.*

That was why it was so easy for her to notice that Peter...no longer seemed as excited about their relationship.

Anxiety flip-flopped in Anna's gut. Had Peter not actually wanted to be an official couple and now regretted it? Had she done something wrong, hurt his feelings in some way?

Anna didn't know, and that ate away at her.

It all came to a head about a week after they became official when Peter invited Anna to his house.

Anna's anxiety grew.

Anna didn't need to knock on the door, as Peter was waiting for her outside, on hand on his dog's head.

"Hello, Anna," Peter said, smiling nervously. He looked stiff and awkward as if he were ready to bolt at any moment.

"Hey, Pete," Anna said, hoping Peter couldn't tell how nervous she was.

"I...I need to tell you something. I should have told you a while ago, but...I didn't realize how serious we were going to get when we started dating," Peter began. Some of Anna's anxiety subsided, as that was definitely not the message of someone about to break up with her, but there were lingering nerves.

What did Peter want to tell her that was so important?

"You don't have to be nervous to tell me anything. I know we've only been serious for a little bit, but I want to be there for you, and I want to have a strong foundation," Anna said, walking over to Peter, smiling. Peter smiled back.

"I know. That's why I have to tell you this. Because...it changes things, and I don't want you to become so committed to me and find this out later and for it to crush your dreams," Peter said, standing up as his smile turned sad. Anna's smile slid from her face as she placed a concerned hand on Peter's shoulder.

"Pete, are you alright?" Anna asked. Peter placed his hand on top of her own.

"I'm...okay. Let's take inside," Peter said, smile turning gentle as he led Anna into his home, an old home filled with equally old things.

Anna wouldn't be surprised if it were inherited from a grandparent.

Peter sat down on his couch, his dog curling up at his feet. He looked nervous and stressed.

"Peter, are you in trouble?" Anna asked, wondering if that was why, if that was why he was acting so strange, so...scared, almost afraid that Anna wouldn't commit to a relationship after learning whatever secret he had.

"What? No! I'm okay...I just...my birth name's not Peter," Peter began, and Anna understood.

Peter was trans and worried that Anna might not want to date him or be in a committed relationship because of it.

Anna almost said something that she would never break up with

someone because of how they were born, but she paused.

This seemed like something Peter had been wanting to say for a while.

She should let him say what he had planned to say. This was clearly important to him.

"My birth name...well, I didn't have one for a while, but my real name is Delaware," Peter said, and Anna froze.

"Peter, that's not funny," Anna said. There was no way her boyfriend, the man she had befriended and fallen for, was the immortal countryhuman of her state. That was impossible! That wasn't how countryhumans worked!

Peter said nothing, and Anna watched as his human form melted away, replaced by the Delaware flag. She watched as horns forced their way out of his skull, and his ears morphed from human ears to cow ears—oh God, this couldn't be happening.

Anna's jaw was hanging loose, and Peter, Delaware, wasn't looking her in the eyes, his ears pressed close to his head.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Anna asked.

"I couldn't. I love you, and I want to be your boyfriend, but I can't reveal my human face until I know it's serious, which is why I waited," Delaware said before finally looking up at her. "I know this changes things. Whatever decision you think is best for you, make it."

"I need time to think," Anna answered. Delaware nodded.

"Of course. Take all the time you need."

With those parting words, Anna left, mind swirling with the information she had just learned.

• □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ •

Peter was Delaware.

Peter was a three-hundred-year-old personified landmass.

Peter had been alive for longer than Anna's family had been in the United States.

It didn't make any sense, and yet it made so much sense at the same time. Anna would have to be blind to say that Peter wasn't weird, that sometimes, his stories about his family seemed too strange to be normal, but Anna would have never expected this.

How could she?

Anna, at risk of sounding like a bad person, hadn't really thought about countrypeople as being able to feel emotions like humans did. They were just so...different that it seemed unlikely, if not impossible.

Never mind finding herself dating one.

It wasn't that Anna didn't like Peter—Delaware, but that it was strange to think of the guy she was dating as being like...well, that.

She couldn't blame him for keeping it secret.

She had looked at his Wikipedia page after finding out, trying to make sense of it all.

As soon as she read about what that one governor had done, she clicked off. It was just...that was Peter. That man she had always seen on the news, always heard about in passing, was her boyfriend.

Her boyfriend had been hurt in the past before. Peter had said he didn't want to tell her until it was serious, but a part of Anna wondered if it was because he wanted to ensure he could trust her, truly trust her, with something like that.

After a few days of thinking it over, Anna invited Peter to her house to talk it out.

"Hey, Anna," Peter said as he walked inside her home. He hadn't brought Reed with him, which was strange considering the dog was

meant to be an emotional support dog, and Anna knew this might be an emotional conversation.

"Hey, Peter," Anna began, "Sorry about disappearing on you for a few days."

Peter smiled.

"No need. You had a lot to think about," Peter said. "Would you prefer me to be in my other form for this?"

"Whatever's more comfortable," Anna said, giving Peter a smile. Peter smiled back, something softer and nervous before his form shifted.

"This is more...my human form isn't a lie, but I feel I can be more honest when I can show you my real face," Peter said. Anna pulled him into a hug.

"I still want to be in a relationship," Anna said, pulling away. Peter immediately perked up at that, anxiety bleeding from his form.

"Really?" Anna nodded.

"Really. I want to make things work, even if it will be a little awkward at first because...you make me happy, Peter."

"You make me happy, too," Peter responded, a wide grin stretching across his face.

"Good," Anna said before gently kissing him.

Anna didn't know how this would end, but she knew, at that moment, that she was happy.

And that was enough for her.

# Lone Star State

Nishikawa Tomikatsu had not expected anything to come out of meeting his state during the war. He had helped save him, and he had spoken with him many times after, but after the war was over, he did not expect to see Texas again, just as he didn't expect to see his brothers in arms as often, with so many of them living in Hawaii.

At least he knew he could still write letters to them, and he did, but the other members of the 442nd Infantry Regiment were human like him, and therefore people he could form relationships with.

So when Tomikatsu came home one afternoon, he nearly dropped his bag in shock at the sight of the State of Texas sitting on his front steps.

"Howdy, Tommy," Texas said with a wave of his hand, smoking a cigarette. Tomikatsu smiled slightly, a little uncomfortable and a little confused.

"Hello. What are you doing here?" Tomikatsu asked, before wincing as he realized that it sounded rude.

But Texas didn't seem to mind, walking forward. As he did so, Tomikatsu noticed that Texas seemed to be almost...nervous.

Why was he nervous to see Tomikatsu?

Tomikatsu's stomach sank a little as his own nervousness began to bubble up. He loved his state, of course, he did, but he would not be ignorant of how it mistreated him, how he faced discrimination, which he had seen from Texas before, in how he seemed so surprised when talking to his battalion back in Europe, and how he still called Tomikatsu "Tommy."

Tomi wasn't even a hard nickname to say, but Texas had to make sure he spoke like a white American, through and through.

"I knew you were one of my people, but the war is over, and I don't...you saved my life and your battalion was used in horrific ways...and I guess I just wanted to make sure that you were okay?" Texas said with a shrug, not fully meeting Tomikatsu's eyes.

Was...was that why he was nervous? Because Texas didn't feel comfortable thanking Tomikatsu or checking up on him?

Tomikatsu knew that Texas was proud—he was *the* Texan, after all—and he knew that Texas had not taken being injured and needing to be saved by a battalion of Japanese well, and Tomikatsu wondered if perhaps behind all his Texaness, Texas was a little more nervous about things than he would admit.

"I am doing okay. It's been hard to readjust after the war, especially since a lot of our things are missing, and we had to get a new house," Tomikatsu said, knowing his mother would be upset with him if she learned he spoke to their state this way after the trauma of internment camps, but knowing—hoping—that Texas was not too different off the battlefield, that perhaps he could speak about the injustice of what had happened to his family even while he fought for America.

Texas seemed surprised by the sentence, before realization dawned on his face, followed by a multitude of different emotions—one of which Tomikatsu thought was guilt.

"Is there anything that I can do to help? Money or tracking down anything that has gone missing?" Texas asked, and yes, that was some guilt on his face. Tomikatsu shook his head.

"It's okay. We will persevere and move forward," Tomikatsu said, because even if it would be nice to have help from the State of Texas, to prove to the world that they were not all enemies or hated spies, but that Tomikatsu and his family were Texans, born and raised, he did not want to admit to his state everything that had happened.

They were acquaintances, perhaps, but not friends, not that close.

"Okay, but let me know if I can do anything. You don't..." Texas

paused, as if he were trying to figure out what to say without sounding like an asshole. Tomikatsu knew this pause, because it had happened a lot when Texas was healing, stumbling over words as he tried to prove that he knew that the 442nd was "better" than everyone they had locked up for a war they didn't start, locked up for looking too much like an enemy.

Tomikatsu didn't like it at times, feeling too much like Texas was making him an exception and not the norm, but also knowing that Texas was...trying, the best he could, and Tomikatsu could appreciate someone who was at least trying to become more respectful.

"There were so many of us locked away across so many states. Do you think that we were all spies?" Tomikatsu asked, his voice not angry or accusatory, just stating a fact he knew that Texas had to confront—whether today or later.

"I..." Texas began, before falling silent. "You fought for the nation. You don't deserve to be treated like shit after the experiences you faced."

It was a lot more than Tomikatsu would have realistically expected before the war.

"Not everyone's minds are changed by that. Especially those who did not witness the worst of the battlefield," Tomikatsu said. Texas chuckled, something in his eyes growing distant, and Tomikatsu was struck by how truly old the person in front of him was, how his eyes had grown old.

"They really aren't. People who don't fight in war do not understand what it takes from you," Texas said, before giving Tomikatsu a smile. "If it were up to me, Tommy, you would get a Medal of Honor. You saved me. We already lost Ken and Florida to enemy hands, and losing another one...it would not have been fun, especially after the state those camps were in..."

Tomikatsu had not seen those camps in person, having stayed in Italy, and a part of him was glad to have never seen that horror.

"I appreciate the thought, but no medal will make people respect me when they don't want to look past me being Asian," Tomikatsu said, "That's just the way things are."

Texas didn't seem to like that answer, looking as he sucked on a lemon, and Tomikatsu wondered if he had overstayed his welcome.

Texas then sighed, cigarette dangling from his fingers.

"That sucks," he said, and Tomikatsu nodded.

It felt weird to speak with his state about things like this, but there was something in the way that Texas seemed to be trying to understand, to change, that made Tomikatsu keep talking.

Maybe he could keep in contact with Texas after all.

# The Interview

Jacob Richardson fidgeted with his papers as he prepared himself for the interview, nervousness running through him. He knew that working for the Countryhumans Archival Research Project would involved working with acutal countryhumans, but...it still felt unbelievable that he was about to talk with and interview one of them.

"Hey Jacob, you ready?" Carmen asked, poking her head into the room.

"No. Kill me now before I humiliate myself," Jacob groaned. Carmen laughed.

"You'll be fine. They're a lot more relaxed than you think," Carmen said. Jacob groaned.

"You're not the one interviewing your country," Jacob said. It wasn't that he was excited about it, but...if he fucked up and America never spoke to them again...it would be his fault.

Not to mention they were interviewing about something that felt person, the United States' mental health and...he was nervous.

"No, but I am interviewing Massachusetts and Vermont," Carmen said, before walking into the room and putting a hand on his shoulder. "You'll be fine. Just make sure they know that they don't have to answer and work with them. Besides, he agreed to the interview, so he is okay with the topic."

Jacob sighed.

"I know, I know. I just...I worry," he said. The organization was still new, but the work they did was important and...Jacob didn't want to be the one to somehow fuck things up.

"We all do," Carmen said, before sighing, "You'll do fine, I promise.

Just stick to the questions we have and ask clarifying questions when needed. You'll do great."

Jacob nodded and followed Carmen out of the room, over to the entrance where they would be meeting their interviewees, tapping his hand against his leg as he did so, the motion soothing him.

He envied how calm Carmen could be about all of this, how this was, in many ways, a dream job for her, and how helping and interviewing were so important to her.

He was also interested in countryhumans, as well, has loved studying them and their history, and this was equally as exciting, great for both his resume and his ever-growing curiosity about the beings who had seen so much, but...he was nervous.

He knew they weren't gods, despite how some people talked about and treated them, but it felt, sometimes, as if one bad day with them could ruin everything.

But they were something more, the only other sentient species that humans shared Earth with.

So when America, Vermont, and Massachusetts entered the building, Jacob's back straightened, and he smiled, trying his best to hide his nerves.

"Hello! Thank you for coming. I'm Carmen Nielson, I'll be interviewing Massachusetts and Vermont, and this is my colleague Jacob Richardson, who will be interviewing America," Carmen said, holding out a hand for the countryhumans to shake.

Jacob shook their hands as well, trying not to stare too much at the antlers on Vermont's head, small and fuzzy as they were.

"It's nice to meet you all," Jacob said, hoping his smile wasn't turning strained.

"Why don't you go with Mr. Richardson, Dad, and we'll work things out with Ms. Nielson?" Vermont said, turning to his father. America nodded before turning to Jacob, kindness in his eyes.

"Is there a room that we should go into?" America asked. Jacob nodded before gesturing for America to follow him.

"This is my first time doing this, so I apologize if I mess anything up. And I know Vermont called you Dad, but I don't want to assume so are you—"

"I am America, he/him. And you're fine. We don't mind if you fuck up; it's not exactly something that a lot of people know a lot about. Besides, we agreed to be interviewed about our DID, so we're expecting questions about it," America said, the soft smile never leaving his face.

Jacob felt his shoulders relax a little at that.

"That's good. I am a bit nervous about this," Jacob said, figuring there was no use in hiding that anymore. America laughed.

"I am too. I want to talk about this...it was a big thing in my life, but I'm very used to avoiding talking about my condition whenever I can, so...this will be good though. I am glad you want to do something focusing on this. It's nice to talk about more modern stuff, not just the stuff from ages ago," America said with a smile, though there was something distant in his eyes.

Jacob looked away and opened the door to the interview room, feeling like he was becoming privy to something too personal for him.

Even if he were about to ask America some very personal questions.

Jacob took his seat, and America sat across from him.

"I am going to start the recording now, unless there is anything that you need or want to talk about before the interview," Jacob said, looking back up at America. America was fiddling with his hands and nodded.

"I am okay with starting now, if you're all ready," the countryhuman said. Jacob nodded, hardly believing that he was about to do this.

Jacob grabbed the recorder and started it before placing it back

down, exhaling through his nerves.

"April 18, 2021. Interview with the US system about the public revelation of their DID. Thank you for meeting with us. I know this is a personal thing to talk about, so I am glad that you were willing to do so."

As he spoke, Jacob felt a little less nervous. Maybe this would go perfectly fine.